National Black Feminist Organization
Chicago Chapter

Summaries of General Body Membership
Meeting Minutes 19 June 1974 to 8 October 1974

19 June 1974 First meeting convened by Brenda Eichelberger (serving as temporary chair) with nineteen women in attendance [how did they find out about the meeting?]

Discussed issues that their chapter would possibly like to address: employment, health care, sexuality, drug abuse, alcoholism, women prisoners, ex-offenders, child care, rape, C-R [agree that these are important but didn't form committees or anything]

Segued into "lengthy" and "heated" discussion about whether to use the term "feminist"
Con: term would alienate the black community, especially black men
Pro: term is pro-female, not anti-male
Con: organization would have to constantly be defensive about its name
Pro: any name change would mean breaking from the national organization
Con: should break from national organization, determine its own title, and become a completely autonomous unit working with black men, bit against them.

[why did women who opposed use of the term "feminist" come to the meeting if they were against the title? Perhaps there was a lack of other outlets for black women's activism? Perhaps they agreed with some of the goals they had heard feminism espoused but they "weren't a feminist, but…"
Organization did end up constantly defending its name and, therefore, it mission. Nelson noted that this diverted some of their attention in National Alliance of Black Feminists.

Were comments of those against the term "feminism" based on being male-identified or based on not wanting to be separatists?]

Decision advocated by Eichelberger: all women interested in joining the Chicago Chapter of the NBFO sign up under area of interest. If there were "enough" [majority?] women who wanted to retain the term feminist or were impartial, then they would continue under that name. Otherwise, Eichelberger would poll each woman by phone and the discussion would be picked up at the next meeting.

[The options, as recorded, were biased in favor of keeping the term. Also the intent of Eichelberger calling each woman individually was to allow women to express their opinion in a "more objective atmosphere" (i.e. less adversarial). But is this possible given that Eichelberger convened the meeting and was, I assume, in favor of the term?]

Women who were there and wanted to join NBFO signed up under the following areas of interest:
Membership committee
Self-image of black women from traditional vein to the Black woman of 1974
Unique black female situation
Human relations
Public relations
Working with younger school-age black women (e.g. girl scouts/ big sister)
Working in the prison system with black women offenders

26 June 1974 Eichelberger still temporary chair, 18 women in attendance

Members polled about use of the term. All present were either pro or impartial and there was no further discussion in it.

Decided to find an office. Decided that it should be centrally located or on the Southside b/c there were already several women's groups on the Northside and there were more black women on the Southside.

Formed top priority committees: fundraising (5), C-R (13), and Office space (4)

3 July 1974 No note of Eichelberger as temporary chair; 17 women in attendance

Guest speaker: Valeska Hinton, Community Relations Specialist for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

Steering Committee: consists of representatives from each committee; coordinates the programs of the total organization and formulates policy to be decided on by the general membership.

Membership Committee: announces general meetings; recruit new members; provide orientation for all newcomers; keeps a membership record; contact for potential members about general information.

C-R Committee: coordinate gathering process (time, place, and frequency); interested members sign-up for C-R and serve on this committee.

Rape-Crisis Intervention Committee: proposed activities include counseling for rape victims; referrals, police/hospital escorts.

Periodicals: publish newsletter; future projects such as newspaper, magazine, quarterly journal, book.

School: school for the special needs and interests of women (e.g. women in lit., auto mechanics, karate, typing, GED, etc.); paid instructors [by whom? fees from courses?]; evening and weekend courses

Social: responsible for social and recreational side of organization; refreshments at meetings; social functions; cards/gifts on special occasions; events (ballet, concerts, etc.); "Above all, this committee would be of most value in contributing to a spirit of comradeship and of sisterhood."

Contact with National Office: reported that nat'l planned to hold conference in conjunction
With other women "most of whom---if not all---are white"; reported that their were 2-4 chapters that had formed in other cities.

Discussed C-R as a priority and the importance of including older women for their wisdom (should actively recruit them); debated the logistics of C-R (during second half of meeting, outside of business meeting, small groups according to C-R guidelines)

10 July 1974 14 women in attendance

Consensus that membership retain national name and apply for charter membership at such time that the chapter fulfilled all requirements.

Michelle Gautreaux involved with rape crisis at Northside Rape Crisis Intervention Line.

17 July 1974 — 11 women attended

Conducted C-R session to begin the four meeting requisite for chapter membership

Decided [voted? Consensus?] that each person would donate $15 for office rental and supplies. Group as a whole would make up the difference for those who could not afford to donate.

Elected temporary officers for three months:
- Eichelberger elected unanimously as president
- Gautreaux elected unanimously as secretary
- Pat Yates elected as treasurer

24 July 1974 — 20 women in attendance [why the big increase in attendance?]

Announced women's art gallery, feminist vegetarian restaurant (Susan B.), and "Fix-it" class by Liberation School of Chicago looking for instructors); non-member offered to take photos for a fee and suggested that "one way [our] organization could be of help would be to organize a work stoppage among black women for two or three weeks until black men were given jobs" [who was this woman? was she a white woman? any idea of how black families would survive without income?]

Treasurer looked into bank accounts and tax-exempt and non-profit status

Agreed to meet weekly to get the organization running smoothly

Next meeting would be short business meeting and then C-R centering on child hoods

31 July 1974 — Some attended publishing workshop with Black Maria, a periodical for publishing the work of women.

$263.15 in budget that would cover two months rent, postage, paper, and phone service.

Continued report on Northside Rape Crisis line [was anyone joining her in working there?]

Steering Committee: decided to send delegation to National Office for more info concerning operations of NBFO; decided to choose a name (Chicago Black Feminists) until chapter status was attained to open a bank account.

Reported new address of National Office [why the move? was last office free?]; sent list of interested Chicago women to Sloan

Eichelberger had attended a C-R workshop sponsored by the Chicago Women's Liberation Union; reported back on pitfalls to be avoided and situations that might arise in C-R. Suggestions included: setting specific goals for the rap group, consistent attendance, necessity of maintaining privacy of the group

National Black Feminist Organization
Chicago Chapter

Steering Committee Meetings

30 July 1974

Members: A. LaVerne Bennett, Brenda Eichelberger, Michelle Gautreaux, Vernita Gray, Carolyn Hall, Pamela Miller, Diane Nash [of SNCC?] Sharon Ritchie, and Patricia Yates

Decided to have general meetings first and third Wednesday of each month; coordinate press release for 11 September meeting and orientation for new members; determined to make general meetings "very structured" [mean? Already using "motions" and "seconding" so what else?]

C-R to be held in small, informal groups with each deciding its own logistics (place, time, date)

Planned informal visit to National Office in August [did this happen?]

8 October 1974

Formed committees based on special interests of Steering Committee and women encouraged to sign up [no input in deciding which issues chapter should focus on?]
Collegiate Feminism (Ritchie/Yates)
Coordination of New CR groups (Clark/Hall)
Females and Education (Bennett)
Health Fare (Johns?/Yates)
The Media (Holmes)
The Rape Crisis Line (Gautreaux)
Women and Religion (Miller)

Miller worked with Eichelberger on clerical functions [volunteer?]

Decided that Steering Committee members would contribute $5/month for business expenses until they felt it was no longer necessary

New members must become dues paying members [differed from nat'l structure of members/voting members]

Public notices of meeting in free weekly paper *The Reader*

Receiving requests for speaking engagement; percentage of honorarium over $25 to be given to Nat'l organization

Beginning work on by-laws and constitution for tax-exempt status

Planning for Women's Day Conference, a Chicago Conference, and an Illinois Conference

National Black Feminist Organization
Organizational Structure *

A. Officers

Chairwoman
- Presides at monthly membership meeting
- Main spokeswoman
- Legal responsibility-checks
- Delegates Responsibility
- Convenes Board Meeting

Vice-Chairwoman
- Acts in the place of the chair
- Liason b/tw Board and Steering Committee
  - Reads report of Steering Committee
  - Attends Steering Committee meetings
  - Legal responsibility- signs checks

Recording Secretary
- Membership meeting
- Responsibility for the record of
  - Membership
  - Board Meetings
  - Keep on file meeting of Steering Committee
    - Reads report (minutes)
    - Legal responsibilities

Corresponding Secretary
- Maintains all organization correspondence
- Works closely with office coordinator
- Refers- corr. regarding policy [?]

Treasurer
- Prepares financial report
- Keeps Books
- Collects Dues
- Legal resp.
- Bonded

Office Coordinator
- Legal responsibility- signs checks
- Works closely with correspondence secretary
- Attends Board Meetings
- Controls petty cash
- Coordinates office volunteer staff
- Arranges meeting places
- Develop office procedure
- Information link with all committees

B. Steering Committee

Made up of chairwoman of each active NBFO committee. Actions, programs or policies can be initiated by either group but must be agreed upon by the two groups before it can be acted upon.

C. Advisory Board

"Will be made up of sisters who are members of the organization who can provide advice and counsel but who are not…[cut off in photocopy]."

D. Membership

~~Board of Directors~~ Officers + ~~Steering Committee~~

Member- any Black woman of African descent who accepts feminism is the organizing priority for NBFO and who participates in the program. Such persons shall have a voice, but not a vote.

Voting Member- any Black woman of African descent who accepts the fact that this is a feminist organization, that meetings are open to Black women of African descent only and has paid dues.

She must also accept the organizational structure and participate actively in one or more of the following activities: regularly attend monthly meetings of National Black Feminist Organization; function on a committee; volunteer Time; provide resources such as money, materials, clip newspapers

council of 7 plus Sloan, Gaiwin?

* Prior to this document (n.d.; ~~est. summer 1974~~) "decision making in NBFO has been accomplished in the past through a steering committee made up of the chairwoman of each active committee plus the input of women who have been putting in time in the NBFO office." This would only be possible for those women living in NYC.

→ consensus

developed by Policy Comm: Gaiwin-Lewis, Handy, Sloan, Vitale, Reed, Sharpe, Williams, Wright, Lacey